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575 there. It was a rough Spartan existence, where individual feelings and preferences had little scope, and where the younger ones were kept busy from dawn to dusk. Ngoni elders believed and indeed it was a key concept in their [858] culture, that boys should be kept busy all the time and made [515] to wash in cold water. Bathing in the cold streams of the Ngoni highlands was part of dormitory life. No Edwardian father talked more piously and convincingly about the merits of cold baths than Ngoni parents did.

575 The boys living in the dormitory continued to be fed from 264 their mother's household. The older boys had their food brought by a child to the kraal gate as was done for their fathers. The younger ones sometimes fetched their own and took it to the kraal gate where they sat on the extreme edge of the men's group. More often they were given what was left over from their fathers' and older brothers' servings. [146] This procedure accounted for the inadequate amounts eaten [272] by the younger boys, though they drank some milk when [262] milking the herds and out at the grazing grounds they made curds and caught birds and baked them in clay. Sometimes the desperation of hunger drove them to steal maize cobs or ground nuts from their mother's granary to roast in the [685] ashes of their fire. This kind of stealing was condemned as very wrong by Ngoni standards, and sometimes older boys, in order to show their authority, forced the young ones to steal in this way on their behalf.

575 What effect did dormitory life produce on the boys? The [867] Ngoni parents, the fathers that is, expected it to produce [155] toughness, leadership, responsibility and respect for authority. On the whole it was successful. The Spartan life ensured toughness, the herding of cattle demanded responsibility and leadership, and the smooth running of dormitory society was based on respect for authority and obedience to it. From time to time the younger boys ganged up together to protect themselves from over-exploitation, and learned in these efforts at resistance the value of joint action. There was con-

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VILLAGE LIFE FOR OLDER BROTHERS AND SISTERS

The youngest boys were not expected to herd cattle until they were ten or eleven years old. Their work was to look after the calves, sheep and goats, sometimes following the cattle to the grazing ground, sometimes wandering round the edge of the village, avoiding the cultivated areas until after harvest. At that time cattle, calves, sheep and goats were driven into the stubble and left to forage.

As a result of dormitory life, combined with cattle-herding, a definite ideal herd-boy personality developed. This was fostered by the hero-worship of the older herd-boys by the young ones. It was also built up by the praise or blame meted out for herding well or badly by the older herd-boys to younger ones, and by the cattle-owners. This 'ideal herdsman' was used by Ngoni ministers and teachers living in the villages to relate their teaching about Christianity to the life around them. Prayers near the kraal, conducted by an Ngoni minister each evening, or before people went on a journey, often began with the words 'Jesus our shepherd, keep us well'. Young teachers often said to me how they always listened as boys when a prayer began like this, and that in school their favourite Bible story was that of David the herd-boy.

When there was a school in the village or near by which the Ngoni elders approved of, the herd-boys had a busy life. They watered the cattle very early, took them to graze and milked them. Then they went to school from ten to two, taking the cattle out grazing afterwards. In the cold weather they went to school from six to ten and herded cattle the rest of the day, after the sun had dried the dew off the grass. School attendance depended on the attitude of fathers to the new learning, and how the village elders regarded the local mission and its teachers. The boys whose fathers had no cattle, in general the non-Ngoni elements in the village, were free to attend school continuously since they had no herding responsibilities. There was some jeering among the boys in the dormitory at those who only went to school and did not

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VIII

Personality and Character

Personality, culture and character

128 The threads of teaching and learning whose ends were grasped in Chapter II have been followed through the intervening five chapters, and our task now is to see what pattern they have made of the system of training given by the Ngoni to their children. The threads have eventually been twisted 121 together to form two separate but linked strands, one the achievement of the Ngoni basic personality and the other the development of individual character. In this chapter I am going to use personality in the sense derived from Linton and Kluckhohn, namely the sum total of the traits which are desired by a society and form part of its culture, and which are instilled into children in the system of training set up by the society. Personality therefore since it is regarded as an aim in child training is a social product. The ideal personality is held up to the growing generation, not so much as a total achievement, but as the acquisition of a number of traits of behaviour, skills and knowledge. The Ngoni basic personality [157] therefore consisted of common personality elements in adults, [155] which, as Kluckhohn says, were largely a product of learning, and that learning was directed and controlled by the system of training. Character on the other hand I am going to use as the sum total of the individual's response to his training. It therefore includes his personal adjustment to the training given by the society, and, as a result, his acquiring of some or many of the basic personality traits, and hence the degree of his approximation to the ideal personality. Over and above

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education to the needs of society and adapting it to the needs of individual children. There is as we all know no final choice possible. Some kind of synthesis is essential, and the balance is always swinging first in one direction and then in another. And here parents, their views on education and their methods of training children in their homes, have a supremely important role to play, almost a controlling role, since they can work in with the aims of formal schooling or persistently try to counteract them. 121

Where this study might lead

'Growing up among the Ngoni' is only one of several studies of growing up in non-western societies. The societies described from this angle of child-training differ from each other structurally and culturally, but there are common elements in the studies of growing up which should be of interest, in western and non-western countries alike, to teachers and parents and all who are concerned about how children are in fact growing up, and the role of formal schooling in this process.

One of the dominant notes in modern psychological advice to young parents and to teachers is the emphasis on security for the young child. It is worth while looking at the early years of Ngoni children from this angle, and perhaps using other studies of growing up as well, examining the kind of security provided by a wide circle of relatives all living round the child's home, and all ready to meet the child's needs; and then comparing this form of security with the dependence of a young child on its mother only, which is characteristic of most small families in western urban societies.

There is another aspect of the security of Ngoni children, found too in several other growing up studies, and that is the freedom conferred on a child because he learns early in life just how to speak and how to behave to other people. This may be an unusual view of the apparent restrictions placed on language, posture, attitude, actions, displayed by a child 155

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155 particularly towards adults. Anyone who has brought up children however knows that they are unhappy with unlimited licence in behaviour, and is aware that the learning of etiquette and manners and obedience, apparently so tiresome in its early stages, does eventually eliminate a number of perplexing choices for children, and by regulating certain relationships confers freedom in other directions. That was my reading of the Ngoni children's reactions to the somewhat formal code of manners taught from their early years and strictly enforced. Ngoni good manners did not mean that the children were coerced and subdued. They were happy, busy, friendly, helpful, endlessly inventive and full of initiative. I suggested here and there in the book that they had various outlets in the middle years of childhood for [154] aggression, jealousy, frustration. There was very little evidence of neurotic tendencies, and, except in certain instances mentioned, there was little apparent inclination to avoid social mixing with age-mates or with other groups and the obligations inherent in such mixing.

The seeming absence of frustration and overt rebellion in the years just after puberty was due to the social recognition by relatives and by the village community of the new stage reached by boys and girls, and to the increasing responsibility required of them for carrying out allotted tasks and for preparing for their future careers. There was no doubt that the outlet for youths of emigration from the villages to work for wages in the south provided a much-needed opportunity at a critical moment in their late teens. In the same way the stimulus of modern schooling, depending on the area and the type of schools in it, helped older boys and girls to look forward to further opportunities of work, of interests, and of escape from the too intimate control of their family and kinship circle and village elders.

121 Another line to be followed in these growing-up studies is the actual pattern of relationships between the parents and the children, the parents and their circle of relatives, the